

October

In October warm weather lingers and the fall colors make the woods and marshes particularly attractive. A walk at Cardoza Farm* or the western section of Crane Wildlife Area* will take you into beautiful woods. October, like every other time of year, is a good time to visit the Moonakis/Quashnet River*. Wherever you go here are some things to keep a lookout for during October:



Ospreys gradually leave during September and October for their long migration to the Caribbean or South America. Most are gone by the end of the month, though you may see one or two late in the fall.

Cranberries ripen, and commercial bogs are harvested. Wild or feral bogs can be picked later, in November and December.

The **first frost** often occurs about now, but warm weather may return afterwards.

Southbound land bird migration is at its peak—summer birds such as Baltimore Orioles leave for the south, to be replaced by the winter visitors such as White-throated Sparrows and Juncos.

Gray Squirrels build round leaf nests for winter, often high in bare trees.

Crows, which have lived in family groups of three to five since spring, now begin to form larger flocks. Crows mob and harass hawks and owls at all times of year, but as the flocks grow the commotion increases.

Fall rains trigger the growth of **mushrooms** which are the visible, spore-producing bodies of fungi. Most of the organism is a network of thin threads underground.

The height of the **fall colors** in Falmouth is usually about the last week of October.

The first **northeaster** brings blustery winds and pushes the sand that moved east in summer southwesterers back westward along Falmouth's south shore.



Male Rufous-sided Towhee. Photo by Craig Gibson

The native **Witch Hazel** blooms; look for the frail yellow flowers of this small tree in woods on the moraine, such as on the trail around Long Pond*.

Asters bloom. Almost two dozen species grow here, ranging in color from white to strong lavender, and in size from that of a baby's fingernail to over an inch in diameter. Goldfinches eat their seeds as autumn progresses.

Buffleheads, usually the first winter ducks to arrive, begin to show up in numbers in the ponds.

* trail maps at: www.300committee.org/maps.htm

Preserving Open Space for Falmouth

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